/11/

DROGPA NAMGYAL'S YOUTH

BEFORE BIRTH

The Exorcism of the 100,000 Child Demons

Quietly the village of Kalatse lies yonder in the Ladakh high- 361
land, deeply imbedded between two enormous mountain ridges of the Western Himalayas. Not far away is the Indus which, still a cascading mountain river here, flows by in a deeply cut-out gorge. The village forms a lovely oasis with luxuriant wheat and barley fields, blooming apricot groves in the midst of towering mountain giants, desolate, projecting rock walls and steep declivities formed by deposits. Quietly the fields and the mountains lie there. The only sounds that strike our ear are the rushing of the nearby mountain river in the gorge and the call of the horse drivers who are transporting on the road along the Indus the trading goods of the Indian merchants. Heavily loaded beasts of burden are carrying these goods to the market of the main town of the area, Leh. There is also the monotonous singing of the women who are watering their field terraces over there. Otherwise everything is still. Through the dormer windows in the roofs of the white-washed houses of the Tibetans the smoke rises up to the blue, cloudless sky. Judging by the position of the sun it is about two o'clock 512
in the afternoon, the time at which the Tibetan goes from the field to his house, when the midday soup is cooked and "drunk" and everybody takes an hour of rest and relaxation.

Only in the Dragshos house (1), the house of Lobsang Wanggyal, 789

1. "Dragshos" is here the name of the house and at the same 552
time the designation of the tribe, the family of the house- 551
owner. Every house in Tibet, and thus also in Ladakh, has its own name by which the present owner can likewise be called. Often the name of the house is prefixed to the name of any one of the members of the family so that the frequently recurring personal names such as "Trashi," "Tsering," "Lobsang," and so forth, can be distinguished from each other. In contrast to the limited number of personal names, which usually have a religious significance, the house names display a great multiplicity. There we have a Cloverfield (Ol-t'an-pa), Oilman (sNum-pa), Cook (Soldpon), Stablemaster (C'ibs-dpon),

595 shall try to show why in some cases
121 polyandry is fraternal, and in others non-
fraternal.

162 The province of Ladak, which I visited,
197 is inhabited by Tibetans speaking an
793 ancient form of the language. Tibet, of
643 course, is run by the Lamaist church and
361 the head of the country is the Dalai Lama.
341 The former kings of Tibet have taken
131 refuge in Ladak since the 8th century A. D.
175 and live in the castle of Leh. The town
is very characteristic of Tibetan towns.
Flat-roofed houses are very well built on
the side of high mountains. The altitude
is 12,000 feet, the entire area is snowed in
• [512] during the winter, and the people live
mostly in their houses and do not go out.

164 These Tibetan houses are not very dif-
123 ferent from our own western type of
354 houses, except in one respect. The kitchen
here has no chimney, so it can be imagined
how much smoke fills the room when they
cook. The Tibetans do not seem to mind;
though we personally found it very difficult
to stand upright in their kitchens when
they were cooking and so spent most of
our time there on all fours, to avoid the
smoke and keep our eyes from watering.
The people suffer from eye trouble because
of this practice and yet they seem to stick
to it in a very curious manner.

291 The characteristic dress of the Ladak
301 women is of red cloth such as the men
523 wear. They have a sheepskin toga which
428 they throw over their shoulders and a very
characteristic head-dress, made of a piece
of red felt with two enormous ears of black
wool. The red felt band is studded with
turquoises at the back, family heirlooms,
handed down from mother to daughter.
Such a headdress is known as a *perak*.

291 The men are tough-looking. They very
857 often have their right shoulders bare;
though sometimes they have a Chinese
shirt thrown over them. When they are
working, they usually have the right
shoulder uncovered, however cold the
weather may be. Looking at Tibetan
children, one could imagine at first sight

212b

857 that they have two heads, but the explana-
291 tion is that they generally carry a younger
[855] brother or sister on their back because the
[512] mother is at work in the house and cannot look after them.

212 It is a fact that all Tibetans are literate,
857 men and women alike. Whatever class
179 they belong to, between the ages of 8 and
871 12 they have to go to the monastery to learn the Buddhist religion, learning to read and write at the same time. This gives these people a very high standard of culture.

595 The first thing to grasp in Tibetan
428 polyandry is that the Tibetans are very
183 keen to keep the property together. The
592 country is poor, and they feel that if the property is divided among several heirs there will not be enough to go around. They not only wish to keep the property intact but also to maintain the family name to this property. Thus, when a certain number of brothers, let us say, three, inherit the property and the house, they do not divide it among themselves but, marrying one woman as they do, they share not only the property but also the woman as a common wife, as well as the children which belong to all of them together. It is a kind of family communism, and certainly prevents division of the property.

595 Thus, the usual type of marriage is that
428 a number of brothers marry one woman
[601] and keep the property. This is called a
581 *bagma* marriage in Tibetan. However, if
592 there are only girls in the family, what usually happens is that the younger girls go off and marry into other families, individually becoming the common wives of a number of brothers. They thus perform the regular *bagma* marriage. The eldest daughter, however, since she has no brothers, inherits both the name and property from her fathers and and is allowed to marry as many husbands as she wishes. These husbands and the children, too, take her name, so that, in this way, the children which issue from the marriage take on the mother's name and inherit the property undivided, and again make regular *bagma*